



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XC269]

#### Endangered Species; Take of Anadromous Fish

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U. S. Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt; one application for a scientific enhancement permit.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that NMFS received an application from California Department of Fish and Wildlife in Santa Rosa, California for an U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific enhancement permit (permit 26568). The purpose of this permit is to enhance the survival of the endangered Central California Coast (CCC) Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU) of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), threatened Northern California (NC) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and threatened CCC DPS of steelhead (*O. mykiss*) in coastal streams of Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin counties through rescue and relocation of these species from drying streams. The public is hereby notified that the application for Permit 26568 is available for review and comment before NMFS either approves or disapproves the application.

**DATES:** Written comments on the permit application must be received at the appropriate email address (see **ADDRESSES**) on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE **FEDERAL REGISTER**].

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the permit application should be submitted to Erin Seghesio via email at [erin.seghesio@noaa.gov](mailto:erin.seghesio@noaa.gov) with “permit 26568” referenced in the subject line. The permit application is available for review online at the Authorizations

and Permits for Protected Species website:

[https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/preview/preview\\_open\\_for\\_comment.cfm](https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/preview/preview_open_for_comment.cfm).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Erin Seghesio (phone: 707-578-8515 or e-mail: [erin.seghesio@noaa.gov](mailto:erin.seghesio@noaa.gov)).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Species Covered in This Notice:**

Central California Coast (CCC) Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU) of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), threatened Northern California (NC) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and threatened CCC DPS of steelhead (*O. mykiss*).

**Authority**

Scientific research and enhancement permits are issued in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et. seq*) and regulations governing listed fish and wildlife permits (50 CFR 222-227). NMFS issues permits based on findings that such permits (1) are applied for in good faith, (2) would not operate to the disadvantage of the listed species which are the subject of the permits, and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA. The authority to take listed species is subject to conditions set forth in the permits.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA. NMFS will evaluate the application, associated documents, and any comment submitted to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA and Federal regulations. The final permit decisions will not be made until after the end of the 30-day comment period and consideration of any comment submitted therein. NMFS will publish notice of its final action in the *Federal Register*.

Those individuals requesting a hearing on the application listed in this notice should provide the specific reasons why a hearing on the application would be

appropriate (see **ADDRESSES**). Such a hearing is held at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

#### *Permit 26568*

California Department of Fish and Wildlife in Santa Rosa, California applied for a section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific enhancement permit (permit 26568). This application involves enhancing the survival of endangered CCC coho salmon ESU, threatened NC steelhead DPS, and CCC steelhead DPS in Mendocino, Sonoma and Marin coastal streams through rescue and relocation of these species from drying streams. This application also includes research and monitoring elements. To assess the efficacy of these rescue activities, a subset of the juvenile salmonids may receive a Passive Integrated Transponder tag (PIT-tag) prior to release. The tagged fish will be tracked by fixed antennas positioned in multiple regional watersheds which will provide information on their movements and survival in the freshwater environment. Otoliths and tissue samples will be collected opportunistically from spawned adult carcasses encountered to learn about the individual's life history. Tissue samples (fin clips and scales) will be collected from carcasses and a subset of live fish for genetic information (fin clips) and age-structure and growth patterns (scales). Activities associated with rescue and relocation could occur anywhere within the Mendocino, Sonoma and Marin coastal watersheds within CCC coho salmon's ESU boundaries. This includes streams from Punta Gorda, CA through, Redwood Creek (Marin County, CA). A summary of these components is provided as follows.

#### *Rescue-Relocation and Research-Monitoring*

This component involves rescuing and relocating coho salmon and steelhead from stream sections experiencing dewatering during the dry season or prolonged periods of below average rainfall. Specific staff listed on the application from both California Department of Fish and Wildlife and co-investigators will follow a predetermined

communication and documentation protocol outlined in the application and permit while implementing these relocation efforts. Standard scientific methods and equipment (*e.g.*, backpack-electrofishing, nets, seines, portable air pumps, transport containers, water chillers, etc.) will be used during the capture and relocation of coho salmon and steelhead. Captured coho salmon and steelhead will be transported for release into habitats within the same watershed (when possible) that are likely to maintain adequate water and habitat quality through the remainder of the dry season. Because these are endangered and threatened populations with low abundance, relocating coho salmon and steelhead from sections of stream where they will likely perish is expected to benefit the survival of these individual fish and enhance the population. The proposed tagging and tissue collection are intended to provide information on the survival and early life history of rescued fish, contributions of rescued fish to subsequent adult returns, and information on the genetic diversity within basins, particularly where natural origin fish are present.

Field activities for the various proposed enhancement components can occur year-round starting in September 2022 through December 31, 2032. The annual sum of take requested across the various components of this effort is as follows: (1) non-lethal capture and release of up to 20,000 juvenile natural origin coho salmon, 9,000 hatchery origin juvenile coho salmon, 6,000 natural origin juvenile NC steelhead and 10,000 natural origin juvenile CCC steelhead, while electrofishing, seining, or dip-netting, (2) non-lethal capture and release of up to 1500 juvenile natural origin coho salmon for the purpose of applying Passive Integrated Transponder-tags (PIT-tags) and collecting tissue samples, (3) non-lethal capture and release of up to 200 adult natural origin coho salmon, 200 adult hatchery origin coho salmon, 300 adult natural origin NC steelhead, and 300 CCC steelhead by beach seine, (4) tissue collection from up to 1000 adult natural origin coho salmon, 1000 hatchery origin coho salmon, 500 adult natural origin NC steelhead, and 500 adult natural origin CCC steelhead carcasses. The potential annual unintentional

lethal coho salmon and steelhead take expected to result from the proposed enhancement activities is up to 2,000 juvenile natural origin coho salmon, 900 juvenile hatchery origin coho salmon, 600 juvenile natural origin NC steelhead, 1000 juvenile natural origin CCC steelhead, 20 adult natural origin coho salmon, 20 adult hatchery origin coho salmon, 30 adult natural origin NC steelhead, and 30 adult natural origin CCC steelhead. These estimates assume up to 10 percent indirect mortality rate. For research and monitoring, indirect mortality rates for capture and handling are generally less than or equal to 2 percent. However, in many cases fish targeted for rescue and relocation are located in isolated habitats and declining habitats with stressful environmental conditions, and therefore it is reasonable to assume a higher potential indirect mortality rate from capture and handling. Absent these rescue efforts, salmonids left in these declining environmental conditions are expected to die.

This proposed scientific enhancement effort is expected to enhance survival and support coho salmon and steelhead recovery within the CCC coho salmon ESU, NC steelhead DPS, and CCC steelhead DPS and is consistent with recommendations and objectives outlined in NMFS' Central California Coast ESU Coho Salmon Recovery Plan and Coastal Multispecies Recovery Plan. See the Permit 26568 application for greater details on the various components of this scientific enhancement effort including the specific scientific methods proposed and take allotments requested for each.

**Dated:** August 11, 2022.

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**Angela Somma,**

*Chief, Endangered Species Division,*

*Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*